

US VIRGIN ISLANDS UNDER TROPICAL STORM WARNING

VITEMA URGES PUBLIC TO PREPARE, CLOSELY MONITOR ERIKA

The National Hurricane Center has placed the Virgin Islands under a Tropical Storm Warning as Erika continues moving toward the Leeward Islands. The warning means tropical storm conditions are expected within 36 hours.

At 5 a.m. the center of Erika was located near 16.1 degrees North, 56 degrees West or about 604 miles southeast of St. Thomas. Erika's forward speed has slowed and the storm system is now on a westerly course at 18 miles per hour. A west to west-northwestward motion at a slightly slower forward speed is expected over the next two days.

Top winds are at 40 miles per hour with higher gusts. Some slow intensification is projected over the next 48 hours. Tropical storm force winds extend outward up to 105 miles from the center.

Erika is expected to produce total rain accumulations of 2 to 4 inches with maximum amounts of 8 inches across portions of the Leeward Islands, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico through Friday morning.

An intermediate advisory will be issued at 8 a.m. followed by the next complete advisory, inclusive of updated strike projections, at 11 a.m.

USVI Forecast

Erika is expected to make her closest point of approach to the territory on Thursday between 2 and 3 p.m. when the center of the storm will be within ten miles of St. Thomas and St. John and 30 miles of St. Croix. At that time, Erika is forecast to be a tropical storm with top winds of 50 miles per hour.

Marine conditions will deteriorate by early Thursday morning and the first rain bands could reach the area on Thursday morning. Tropical Storm Erika is expected to produce rainfall amounts of 2 to 4 inches with maximum amounts up to 8 inches across all the islands. Marine conditions expected: 10 to 12 feet with occasional seas up to 15 feet and winds between 35 and 40 knots with higher gusts mainly in squalls.

VITEMA and the National Weather Service are advising the public to make final preparations and to closely monitor the development of Tropical Storm Erika. Stay tuned to local radio and

television for weather updates and for more information and instructions from local government officials.

For more information about hurricane preparedness visit www.VITEMA.gov/hurricanes, www.Ready.gov or www.Listo.gov, or call VITEMA at 340-773-2244, 340-774-2244 or 340-776-2244.